

RICHARD BANISTER

SOME FURTHER DATA*

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THAT¹ invaluable document on the early history of British Ophthalmology, MS. Sloane 3801 (British Museum), was printed in full by James (1933), from whose book Fig. 1 (overleaf) is reproduced. The MS. was subsequently shown to have been written by Richard Banister (James and Sorsby, 1934). The evidence then advanced was largely indirect, but additional evidence is now available which puts this conjecture beyond doubt.

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

The Lincoln Consistory Court records contain the will of Gabriel Bannester of Sedgebrook (Wills, 1595, Vol. II, No. 26).

In the name of God Amen the XVth daye of Julye An Dni 1595 I Gabriell Bannester of Segbroke in the Countye of Lyncolne gent sicke in bodye butt holle in mynde and of good and perfect remembrance prayse be to God doe make and ordayne this my laste will and testament in mann^{er} and forme followinge firste I commytt my soule into the hands of Almightye God and my bodye to the earthe from whence yt came. Itm I gyve to ye mother Church of Lyncolne iiij^d Itm I give to my sonne Rychard Bannester in monye vj^l xiijs iiij^d Itm I gyve to my sonne francis Bannester in monye vj^l xiijs iiij^d Itm I gyve to my sonne Anthonye Bannester in monye vj^l xiijs iiij^d Itm I gyve to Ellsabeth Childe iij^l vjs viij^d Itm I gyve to my doughter Ellyn one cowe Itm I gyve to marye Bellarbye ye yonger in monye V^s. The reste of all my goods both moveable and unmoveable my debts legacies funerall expences wth all other duties paid and discharged I gyve them hollye to Issabell my wyfe whome I make full and sole executrix of this my last will and testament. And I make Willm Childe supervisor heareof and for hys paynes I gyve hym xij^d

Wytnesses hearof

Jamys Hollmes

Robert Gibson

Willm Childe

Clark.

Proved at Grantham 19 July 1595.

It will be noted that the testator refers to his sons, Rychard, Francis, and Anthonye, and to his daughter Ellyn. Ellsabeth Childe was also his daughter, for the marriage of Elizabeth Bannester to William Childe at Sedgebrook church is recorded in the Parish

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register on November, 21, 1591. It is possible that Marye Bellarbye was also a daughter.

The marriage of the testator to Issobell Johnson is recorded in the Parish register of Sedgebrook on October 15, 1565. The registers also give the following information on baptism:

Ellen Bannester, baptised in August (day is illegible) 1566.

Gabriell Bannester on December 22, 1571, Elizabeth Bannester on May 9, 1573, and John Bannester on January 27, 1576/7.

The baptism records agree with the will as far as the daughters, Ellen and Elizabeth, are concerned. On the other hand there is no mention in the will of Gabriell or John, whose baptism is on record. But in the Sloane MS. both "Gabriell my younger brother" and "another younger brother called John" are mentioned as having died. (The transcript given by James as "Gabriel & my younger brother" is a misprint, there being no "&" in the MS.). It would therefore seem that for some reason the baptism of Richard was not recorded at Sedgebrook and that Richard was older than Gabriell, who was baptised on December 22, 1571. If this reading is correct, it puts Richard's year of birth at *c.* 1570.

It is unfortunate that there is no record of Richard Banister's baptism for this would indicate the date of birth. Whether the family was living away from Sedgebrook in the years between 1566-71, and 1573-77, or whether for some reason there was a clinical baptism of Richard, or (as occasionally happened) no record whatever was made of this baptism, it is impossible to say. Enquiries at Barrowby, the boundaries of which come almost up to the Sedgebrook Parish church, have failed to bring forward any further records of baptism. At Grantham there is a record of a baptism of a Bannister with an illegible Christian name on November 26, 1572.

The will of Gabriell Bannester of Sedgebrook and the records of baptism of his children are therefore of value in that they help to ascribe the Sloane MS. to Richard Banister, and to confirm the conjecture made on the basis of the Banister portrait at the Royal College of Surgeons of England that he was born *c.* 1570 (Sorsby, 1948).

HOLOGRAPHS AT STAMFORD

The will of Richard Banister left to the Parish church of St. Mary's in Stamford:

ten pounds [to] bee putt forth by the Minister, Churchwardens and the discreetest men in the said parish after the rate of seaven pounds in the hundred, the increase whereof shall bee bestowed uppon Divinity Bookes yearely, or once in two yeares, and the same bookes shall bee placed in the Library in the said Church there to remaine for ever.

This library still exists, and now consists of about 150 books given at various times from Banister's day to this. The books were originally housed in the south aisle of the chancel. They are now kept in the vestry on the ground floor of the tower. The library Catalogue Book contains records of accessions from the Banister fund up to 1645, but after that it is heard of no more.

About 1725 a club or society 'of gentlemen' was formed, consisting of subscribers or 'contributors' to the library, and the management of it was vested in them. A blank lending slip printed for the 172-'s and issued by 'the Gentlemen the Contributors for the Library in St. Mary's Church, Stamford' is extant. Two links with Banister have also survived:

(1) *The original Library Catalogue Book*.—This was damaged by fire and water as the result of a fire in the vestry some years ago. It was, however, skilfully repaired by the experts at the Lincoln Diocesan Record Office and is now kept in the church safe. The first entry in the book is a memorandum (p. 3) purporting to be made on July 14, 1623, of a gift by one Edward Robinson from an 'Inn in Fetter Laine called the whyte horse' of an annuity of £11 6s. 8d. for 60 years from the date of the memorandum, to be paid quarterly to 'St. Maries Stamford' 'for Bookes, reparacions and other necisaries'. It is thought the memorandum must have been copied into the book, perhaps from an original document, at a later date, and may perhaps have been entered by Banister himself, who, as seen below, provided "this paper book in fol." for the purpose of the catalogue. On page 7 there is what appears to be the earliest list of 'Bookes in the Librarye'. The first part of this list, is, we are inclined to think, in Banister's handwriting.

The Catalogue contains several entries by William Dugard, master at the Stamford Grammar School in 1636, who appears to have acted as librarian at that time. On p. 13 there is an entry of the clause in Richard Banister's will relating to his legacy to the library of £10. On p. 15 there is a further note on the history of the library "founded and begun" by Richard Banister "in the yeare of or Lord 1625". A note on p. 16 lists six books given by Richard Banister "in his life-tyme":

1. This paper-book in fol. wch was given for this purpose to write therein the names of the bookes now, or hereafter, to bee given to the said Library. p 't'—0.10.0.
2. Galeni Opera in 2 vol. in folio.
3. Origani Ephemerides in 2 vol. in 4to.
4. Dr. Bownd his doctrine of the Sabbath in 4to.
5. Sermons and Lectures by John Day in 4to.
6. Robt. Cowdray his Treasury or Storehouse of Similies in 4to.

(2) *The actual books, listed above, which Banister gave to the*

Library.—The donor's signature and various notes appear on these volumes, only one of which, "Sermons and Lectures by John Day in 4to." (No. 5), has been lost. An example of the signature appears in Fig. 2.

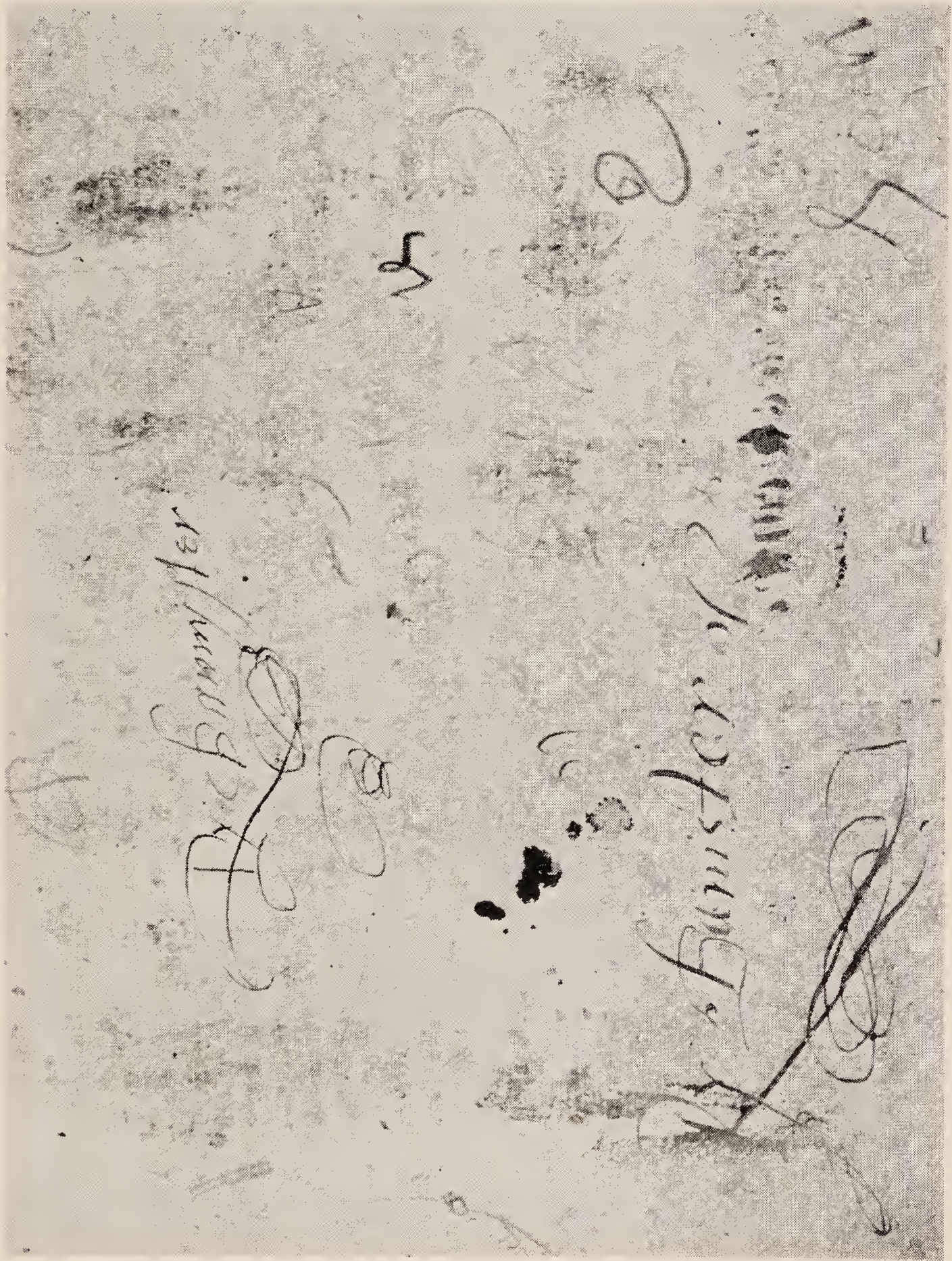


FIG. 2.—Scribbles on last flyleaf at end of Vol. II of *Galen Opera*, the front page of which is also marked with Banister's name.

The tymes of ye natyvetyes of/Richarde Banisters Children
 Gabriell Banister was borne upon ye munday
 beinge ye 16 of April 1599 hora inter 4 et 5 ant.
 Ann was borne ye 6 of december bein saterdaye
 1600 hora inter 7 et 8 ant.
 Richarde was borne upon ye 26 of november
 being frydaye 1602 hora inter 10 et 11 ant.
 Jhon was borne ye 12 of november beinge
 Saterdaye 1603 [here is a cancellation] hora inter 6 et 7 ante.
 Ann dyed ye x of feabruarye betwyxte 12 & 1
 of ye clock 1604.
 Fraunces was borne upon wednesdaye about
 10 of ye clocke at nyght.
 Suesanne was borne upon mydsomer daye
 att 4 of ye cocke [sic] 1612.
 Brydget was borne upon sunday was ? senite
 befor maydaye inter hora 7 et 8 post.

The hand-writing on this page, as well as that seen in the various other notes, appears to be identical with that of MS. Sloane 3801.

REFERENCES

- JAMES, R. R. (1933). "Studies in the History of Ophthalmology in England".
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